



## **20th Annual Fleet Week New York Ships Out**

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NEW YORK – The 20th annual Fleet Week New York came to a close on May 30, 2007. Beginning with the USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81), ships began departing from the Big Apple at 8:30 AM. Berthed at Staten Island’s Stapleton Pier (also named Sullivan’s Pier after the Sullivan brothers), Churchill was followed by USS Oscar Austin (DDG 79), USS San Jacinto (CG 56), USS Stephen W. Groves (FFG 29) and USS Hue City (CG 66) at half hour intervals. USS Wasp (LHD 1) was underway from Manhattan Pier 90 at approximately 10:30 AM.

The 20th annual Fleet Week New York saw more than 76,000 visitors this year, with over 47,000 visiting Manhattan’s Pier 90 and more than 29,000 people visiting Stapleton Pier.

While in town for Fleet Week New York, Sailors and Marines were treated to the sights, sounds and hospitality the ‘city that never sleeps’ has extended to them.

Fleet Week New York City 2007 is the 20th annual event of its kind. This year there was a presence of six Navy ships, including multipurpose amphibious assault ship Wasp moored at Manhattan’s Pier 90, and guided-missile cruisers Hue City and San Jacinto, guided missile frigate Groves, guided missile destroyers Churchill and Oscar Austin, and Coast Guard Cutter Katherine Walker moored at Staten Island’s Stapleton Pier.

Lt. j.g. Luke Vogel, Information Warfare Officer on board USS Winston S. Churchill said Fleet Week is a great for the Sailors.

“It's definitely increasing morale,” said Vogel. “There's a day-to-day life on the ship and that can get very tedious. This is very important for morale in general, to get out in the community and do some events that are more relaxed than heaving lines and other shipboard operations.”

Manhattan resident Matthew Sheller said the military presence in town is good for the city. “I think it's encouraging having the [Sailors and Marines] here in town,” said Sheller. “I think sometimes New York needs a rejuvenation of American spirit.”

Community relations (COMREL) events were among the activities Sailors and Marines could participate in during Fleet Week. Project Hope, a church-sponsored organization providing resources, counseling and food to inner-city children and their families, hosted an event that gave Sailors a chance to get involved with the local community.

“I think it's really important for [the Sailors] to integrate themselves in a community and see a little bit more of the world,” continued Vogel. “It's good for them to get exposed to other areas of the country, and it's really good for the public to see a positive side of the military.”

Other events bringing the Sailors out into the community included a softball tournament with participating elements from all the Fleet Week ships. Good-natured sports competitions among ships' crews, Marines and New York Police Department and Fire Department members are always among the Fleet Week events. At the culmination of athletic competition, the Fisher Cup is awarded—this year's winner was Wasp.

Other Fleet Week festivities included trips to national television shows such as Late Night with David Letterman and Good Morning America. Landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty and bus tours of the city were offered free of charge to those servicemembers who visited them in uniform during Fleet Week.

WASP Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuels) 3rd Class Ludwin Salazar, said he was surprised by the warm reception he's received from the locals.

"Before 9/11 happened, I didn't think New York was a very pro-military place," said Salazar, "but now I can feel the appreciation the people of New York feel for the armed forces for the sacrifices we've been making while we're fighting the war."

"I've spent my off-duty days getting to know the city," continued Salazar. "I did a lot of walking around, seeing the sites at Ground Zero, I went to the Statue of liberty and ate at some great restaurants."

From the perspective of a servicemember and a New York native, Chief Intelligence Specialist (AW/PJ) Lawrence Brown, Office of Naval Intelligence, said it gave him a great sense of pride having the Navy in his home town.

"This is my home," said Brown. "It's nice to see the welcoming response from the people of the city. So to my shipmates, I say, 'welcome to my back yard'".

Brown also said he hopes the positive attitude toward the military continues once the ships leave New York.

"I think it's important that the city realizes that we are still at war and the people of New York see that it's not a war without faces," Brown continued. "And I hope they will continue to remember us - we're real, we are protecting our country with pride, but please remember us."

More than 3,000 Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen were in the New York metropolitan area for Fleet Week.

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